United Nations S/2000/481

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 May 2000

Original: English

Letter dated 24 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward a statement dated 24 May 2000 of the Government of Eritrea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, concerning the appeal issued by the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Haile **Menkerios**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 24 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Government of Eritrea concerning the appeal issued by the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity

The Government of Eritrea welcomes the communiqué of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea issued on 24 May 2000 (see enclosure).

The OAU communiqué requests, among other things, "Ethiopia and Eritrea to immediately implement the redeployment of their respective forces to the positions they controlled prior to 6 May 1998, in conformity with paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Modalities without prejudging the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the end of the delimitation and demarcation process".

The OAU communiqué affirms that "Eritrea stated its readiness to respond immediately and favourably to the two-point appeal of the current Chairman of OAU, namely, the immediate cessation of the fighting and the resumption of proximity talks".

Ethiopia on the other hand refused to accept a cessation of the fighting although this was a central point of the appeal of the current Chairman and a necessary condition for the implementation of redeployment in accordance with the Modalities of Implementation. In this connection, OAU in its communiqué has stated that it "strongly deplores that its appeal for an immediate end of the fighting has not yet been heeded". Unable to persuade Ethiopia to accept a cessation of the war, OAU has appealed for measures to be taken by both sides "with the aim of initiating the de-escalation of the conflict to arrive at its cessation".

Eritrea has decided, for the sake of peace, to accept the OAU appeal for de-escalation. In this spirit, Eritrea:

1. Announces, in accordance with the second requirement of the OAU communiqué, that it has decided to redeploy its forces to positions held before 6 May 1998. Eritrea will begin this redeployment at midnight, 25 May, in the Zalanbessa area;

2. Reiterates, in accordance with the fifth requirement, its commitment to implement the Framework Agreement and the Modalities and to resolve the border dispute in conformity with the two aforementioned documents;

3. Expresses its readiness to finalize consolidated Technical Arrangements that will pave the way for the full implementation of the OAU peace package;

4. Expresses its readiness to send its delegation to the Algiers proximity talks.

In heeding the appeal of OAU, Eritrea notes that Ethiopia's pursuit of the war in defiance of OAU and the international community has cost the lives of tens of thousands and the displacement of a million citizens. Furthermore, Eritrea requests that OAU and the international community take all necessary action in the event that Ethiopia once again refuses to heed OAU's call.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmara
24 May 2000

Enclosure

Communiqué of the Organization of African Unity on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea

At the initiative of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), an OAU delegation led by Ahmed Ouyahia, Personal Envoy of the current chairman, visited Addis Ababa and Asmara from 21 to 24 May 2000.

This mission falls within the purview of the intensive efforts made by the current Chairman and particularly since the adjournment of the Algiers proximity talks and the resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea, efforts aimed at putting an immediate end to the fighting and bringing back quickly the two Parties to the negotiating table for the finalization of consolidated Technical Arrangements and consequently the implementation of the Framework Agreement and the Modalities for the peaceful and definitive resolution of the border dispute between the two Parties.

In Addis Ababa, the OAU delegation was received by Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia. In Asmara, and in the absence of the Head of State from the Capital, the delegation held talks with a delegation of senior officials led by Mr. Woldensae, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and including the Director of the Cabinet and other senior advisers of the Head of State. Furthermore, and throughout this mission, the Personal Envoy held close consultation with Salim Ahmed Salim, OAU Secretary-General.

To each of the two Parties, the Personal Envoy reiterated the appeal of the current Chairman for an immediate cessation of the fighting and the speedy resumption of the proximity talks. The Personal Envoy stressed that this appeal was also repeated by the international community and particularly by the United Nations Security Council.

Eritrea stated its readiness to respond immediately and favourably to the two-point appeal of the current Chairman of OAU, namely, the immediate cessation of the fighting and the resumption of proximity talks.

On its part, Ethiopia which stated that it was ready for an immediate resumption of the proximity talks, considered, however, that the fighting could not stop before the restoration of the territorial status quo prevailing at 6 May 1998.

At the same time and beyond this fundamental divergence between the two Parties, the delegation noted that:

1. Ethiopia stated solemnly that it had no territorial ambitions in Eritrea;

2. Each of the two Parties stated that it was still committed to the Framework Agreement and the Modalities that they had accepted and that had been unanimously endorsed by the thirty-fifth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Algiers;

3. Each of the two Parties restated its commitment to the redeployment of its troops to the line of 6 May 1998 and that in conformity with the Modalities that they had mutually accepted;

4. Finally, each of the two Parties committed itself to resolving the territorial dispute on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and the applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation with the assistance of the Cartographic Unit of the United Nations and, if necessary, through arbitration.

In the face of this situation, OAU strongly deplores that its appeal for an immediate end of the fighting has not yet been heeded, while the necessary elements for a peaceful, fair and definitive resolution of this conflict and particularly the border dispute, have already been defined by the Organization, accepted by the two Parties and endorsed by the international community as a whole.

At the same time, OAU expresses its deep concern about the thousands of deaths already caused by the resumption of fighting on 12 May 2000, a terrible situation to which should be added the suffering and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilian victims of this fratricidal conflict. In addition, the continuation of this armed conflict is likely to undermine the stability and security of the entire subregion.

This is why OAU reiterated its urgent appeal for an immediate end to the fighting and the resumption of peace negotiations.

Furthermore, and with the aim of initiating the de-escalation of this conflict and arrive at its cessation:

(a) Firstly, OAU requests Ethiopia and Eritrea to immediately implement the redeployment of their respective forces to the positions they controlled prior to 6 May 1998, in conformity with paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Modalities without prejudging the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the end of the delimitation and demarcation process;

(b) Secondly, and to this end, OAU requests Eritrea to announce immediately its decision to carry out this redeployment in conformity with paragraph 1 of the Modalities and to implement it immediately;

(c) Thirdly, and in the same spirit, OAU requests Ethiopia to announce immediately after Eritrea, its decision to redeploy its forces according to paragraph 2 of the Modalities, it being understood that this deployment must concern all the positions taken since 6 February 1999 and that were not under Ethiopian control before 6 May 1998;

(d) Fourthly, OAU takes note of the statement made by Ethiopia according to which it has no claim on the territory of Eritrea and requests it to reaffirm this publicly and officially;

(e) Fifthly, OAU takes note of the commitment of Ethiopia and Eritrea to implement the Framework Agreement and the Modalities that they had mutually accepted, and particularly to resolve their border dispute in conformity with the two aforementioned documents;

(f) Sixthly, OAU takes note of the readiness of the two Parties to finalize quickly the consolidated Technical Arrangements, then proceed to the signature of the Framework Agreement, Modalities and consolidated Technical Arrangements, to establish a formal cessation of hostilities and implement faithfully all the three documents constituting the peaceful and definitive settlement plan for the resolution of the conflict;

(g) Seventhly, on behalf of the current Chairman of OAU, the Personal Envoy invites the two Parties to send their delegations to Algiers for the resumption of the proximity talks, immediately after the publication of the statements of each Party as stated in paragraphs (b) and (c) above.

OAU hopes that this appeal will be heeded by each of the two Parties and that wisdom will prevail in the interest of the two brotherly and neighbouring peoples. It also hopes that the international community will support this effort aimed at stopping the fighting in this bloody conflict and opening the way for the full implementation of the peace plan proposed by OAU, accepted by the two Parties and supported by the entire international community.

Algiers and Addis Ababa
24 May 2000